



Testimony before the Public Health Committee
Proposed Bill 5746 – An Act Concerning a Task Force on Childhood Obesity
H.B. 5110 – An Act Concerning the Development and Use of a Universal Child Health Form
Submitted by Maggie Adair, Executive Director
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The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance thanks the Public Health Committee for the opportunity to testify. I am Maggie Adair, Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. The Alliance is a statewide advocacy and membership organization committed to improving outcomes for all children, birth to age eight, in the areas of early learning, health, safety, and economic security.

The Alliance supports **Proposed Bill 5746 – An Act Concerning a Task Force on Childhood Obesity**. Childhood obesity is a national and state issue that sparks a call for action. A 2012 report conducted by the CT Department of Public Health (DPH) issued startling findings: nearly one in six Connecticut children in kindergarten and third grade is overweight, and one in seven children in kindergarten and one in six children in third grade is obese.

The DPH study found that obesity rates are significantly higher in low-income communities. It found that 40.8% of non-Hispanic Black and 43.3% of Hispanic children were overweight or obese compared to 26.8% of non-Hispanic White children. Children were more likely to be obese coming from schools where one-half of the population was eligible for free or reduced price school lunch compared to schools where less than a quarter were eligible (24% obese vs. 12% obese.)

This is clearly a call to action. Children who are overweight or obese in the very early years are more likely to face chronic illness later in life. Prevention and intervention strategies must begin in the earliest years of a child's life.

While poverty is not causally linked to obesity, we need to examine factors related to poverty, such as unsafe housing, poor air quality, lack of outdoor physical resources, lack of affordable health care and facilities, absence of supermarkets in urban areas, lack of transportation to sources of healthy foods, and unaffordability of healthy foods.

A Task Force on Childhood Obesity presents an opportunity to convene experts, policy makers, and community leaders to identify practical, realistic, and evidence-based strategies to turn the curve.

We also support the intent of **H.B. 5110 – An Act Concerning the Development and Use of a Universal Child Health Form**. A unitary health form eliminates multiple forms, reduces redundancy, streamlines the process, produces centralized data, and promotes clarity for parents, physicians, and providers.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.